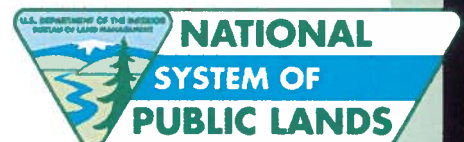


Flanigan, Dogskin Mountain, and Granite Peak Wild Horse Gather

Finding of No Significant Impact

DOI-BLM-NV-C020-2011-0506-EA

October 2011



Background

The Proposed Action is to gather and remove excess wild horses within and outside the boundaries of the Flanigan, Dogskin Mountain, and Granite Peak Herd Management Areas (HMAs) in January or February 2012 and to implement population control measures for wild horses that are gathered and released. Approximately 283 excess wild horses would be permanently removed from the gather area. These HMA's are within the jurisdiction of the Sierra Front Field Office (SFFO) and are located approximately 20 miles northeast of Reno, Nevada in Washoe County. The gather, treatment and removal effort is anticipated to take seven to 10 days. All three HMA's currently exceed the Appropriate Management Level (AML) for wild horses. Table 1 lists the population inventory, recent removal and AML information for each HMA.

Table 1. 1973 Population Inventory/Recent Removals

HMA	1973 Population Inventory	2010/2011 Population Inventory	Recent Removals	AML
Flanigan	96	324*	9 animals in 2001	80-124
Dogskin Mountain	6	22	36 animals in 2005	10-15
Granite Peak	6	38	3 nuisance animals in 2010	11-18

*2011 population inventory data

Under the *Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Action of 1971* (WFRHBA), the Secretary of the Interior is directed to "manage wild free-roaming wild horses and burros in a manner that is designed to achieve and maintain a thriving natural ecological balance on the public lands."

The AML for each HMA was previously determined through a public decision-making process that resulted in a Multiple Use Decision or Herd Management Area Plan. These decisions allocated forage in Animal Month Units (AUM's) between wildlife, wild horses, and livestock. Table 2 lists the AML information for each HMA.

Table 2. HMA's and AML's.

HMA	Acres (BLM-managed)	AML Range	AUM's	MUD Decision Year
Flanigan	17,101	80-124	1,488	1990
Dogskin Mountain	6,895	10-15	180	1993
Granite Peak	3,886	11-18	204	1993

The excess numbers of wild horses in these HMAs has resulted in AML wild horses moving outside of the HMA boundaries in search of food and water. Many wild horses now reside outside the HMA boundaries. The overpopulation of horses is contributing to deterioration of range health.

Land Use Plan Conformance

The Proposed Action is in conformance with the Carson City Field Office Consolidated Resource Management Plan (CRMP) adopted in May 2001. The following decisions in the CRMP pertain to management of wild horse populations:

Policy

WHB-1, #2 "Remove excess wild horses and burros from public lands to preserve and maintain a thriving ecological balance and multiple-use relationship..."

Outcomes

WHB-2, #1 "AML's to be set through multiple use decisions."

Finding

Based on the analysis in the *Flanigan, Dogskin Mountain, Granite Peak Wild Horse Gather Environmental Assessment* (DOI-BLM-NV-C020-2011-0506-EA), I have determined that the Proposed Action will not have a significant effect on the human environment and an environmental impact statement is not required. This finding and conclusion is based on the consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), both with regard to the *context* and the *intensity* of impacts described in the EA.

Context:

The project area consists of three HMAs: Flanigan comprised of 17,101 acres; Dogskin Mountain comprised of 6,985 acres; and Granite Peak comprised of 3,886 acres of BLM-managed lands.

Intensity:

1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

The Proposed Action is to gather, treat and remove wild horses within and outside the boundaries of three HMA's. Approximately 283 excess wild horses would be permanently removed from the gather area. During the gather operations, there would be short-term stresses to animals as they are gathered by use of helicopter, herded to trap sites, and held in holding corrals. Some animals may be transported to other facilities to be prepared for adoption. All mares that are gathered for and released back into the Flanigan HMA would be treated with PZP-22 and the sex ratio would be adjusted to 60 percent male. Although the Final EA analyzed the use of PZP-22 and adjusting the sex ratio to favor stallions for all HMAs, the BLM may determine during implementation not to use these population growth controls for the Dogskin Mountain and Granite Peak HMAs due to their low AML. Although the Final EA analyzed the use of PZP-22 and adjusting the sex ratio to favor stallions for all HMAs, the BLM may determine during implementation not to use these population growth controls for the Dogskin Mountain and Granite Peak HMAs due to their low AML. If the gather efficiency of 80 percent is achieved, the BLM anticipates that approximately 26 to 32 mares from the Flanigan HMA would be treated with PZP-22.

Foals born in 2011 would mostly be between six to nine months of age at the time of this gather and would be removed as "weaned foals." Any foals less than four months of age would

be either removed or released with its mare depending on the disposition of the mare (returned to their HMA area or moved for adoption). For those animals that are returned to their respective HMA area, normalization would be expected to occur quickly. Vegetation and forage conditions within the gather area would likely improve for a one to three year period after the gather. Wildlife would also benefit from the improved vegetation and forage conditions.

2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

Standard Operating Procedures for Wild Horse Gathers (Appendix B in the Final EA) would be followed to protect human health and safety, and to protect the health and safety of the wild horses during the gather operations. The public would not be permitted to enter the immediate area of the trap site including the holding corrals. In accordance with BLM Instructional Memorandum (IM) No. 2010-164 (Appendix E in the Final EA), the public would not be permitted to have direct contact with the animals.

3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

No wetlands, park lands, prime farmlands, wild and scenic rivers, or Areas of Environmental Concern will be affected by the Proposed Action. The location of trap sites and holding corrals would occur at previously disturbed areas. During implementation, if sites need to be moved to new areas due to the location of wild horses at that time, a cultural resources monitor would inspect the site and ensure that any historic resources are avoided.

4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

The effects of the gather are well known. No unresolved issues have been identified.

5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

There are no highly uncertain effects, or unique or unknown risks with the Proposed Action.

6) The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The Proposed Action would not set precedent for future actions with significant effects. The Proposed Action would carry out a gather, treatment and removal effort of wild horses in January or February 2012. Substantially similar follow-up gathers could occur during the period of 2013 through 2018, to ensure the population is at AML and/or to implement population control measures described in the Proposed Action.

7) Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

The Proposed Action is not related to other actions with individually significant but cumulatively significant impacts.

8) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the NRHP or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.*

The Proposed Action includes the use of vehicles and trucks with trailers, which would remain on existing roads. Trap and holding corrals would be subject to cultural resources monitoring to ensure that no adverse effect to historic properties would occur.

9) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the ESA of 1973.*

The Proposed Action would not affect endangered or threatened species or their critical habitat.

10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

The Proposed Action will not violate or threaten to violate any federal, State, or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.



James W. Schroeder
Acting Field Manager
Sierra Front Field Office

10/28/2011
Date

